

613 *penricei*), and *otinyama viakasa* (animals having paws, from the
 825 lion down). No other *oluse* has any such rules. The chief function
 621 of the *oluse* is as a local residence group. Within the *oluse* there is
 no inheritance of property but only succession to office, which
 from the king to the village headman is from father to son, or from
 elder to younger brother, with only as much recognition of primo-
 geniture as belongs to the general idea of the hierarchy of age.
 Succession to office is further affected by the democratic tendencies
 already noted with regard to the kingly succession.¹ The character
 of the *oluse* as a series of local groups is further borne out by the
 character of its priesthood, which lies wholly with the village
 headmen.

613 The *oluina* is not a local group, since its members for the most
 part live in the villages of their several lines of paternal descent—
 each with his *oluse*. When an Ocimbundu speaks of his family
 (*epata*) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a
 recognized head in some elder, it is generally his *oluina* to which
 he refers. This family elder (*ukulu wepata*) is generally both the
 legal and spiritual head of the family. He is the family high-priest
 in charge of the spirit-hut (*etambo*) of the family guardian spirit
 (*osinde*)² of whom there may be more than one and of whom he
 may become one after death. This family head is generally the
 eldest in the maternal line. In these days the priestly and the legal
 functions may be divided considering the advantages of having
 for legal head one who knows the ways of this world, while the
 spiritual head needs rather to be acquainted with the spirit-world.
 (428) Property is inherited through the *oluina* from mother's brother to
 613 sister's son.³ Only the *oluina* is an organization in the wider or
 179 more than local sense, and it is to it that the children belong.
 Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his
 sister's sons and was even able to pawn them or sell them into
 slavery to meet his own debts.⁴ The patrilocal household is

¹ See *supra*, p. 22 f.

² The head of an *oluina* may or may not be a village headman. In case he is, he will be priest of two lines and have two spirit-huts. There may be more than one spirit-hut in a single village.

³ This fact was noted by A. Bastos, *Trapo Gernes sobre a Etnografia do Distrito de Benguela* (Lisbon, 1909), p. 33 (par. 39^o).

⁴ This has been noted by a number of writers. Bastos, *op. cit.*, p. 29 (par. 16^o) adds that once a father has redeemed his son, the maternal uncle can never sell him again. Cf. *ocunali potentes* among the Ba-Ila, E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ilu-Speaking People* (London, 1920), vol. 1, p. 320.

611 dispersed. Both groups have ritual leaders, whose offices are quite distinct. Barnes' suggestion⁽¹⁾ is that the two groups must be father's/patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, with the qualification mentioned below.

613 The class consists of a large number of village groups, some of which recognize mutual relationship,⁽²⁾ but with no recognized head (other than the village headman) except in the case of the royal families. Land is owned by the class and passed on within it from father to son, or from elder to younger brother. Succession to village or tribal office, from village headman to king, descends in the same way.⁽³⁾ Ritual leadership within the class lies with the village headman, who is in charge of the spirit-but (*etombo*) of the guardian spirit of the village (or of the nuclear class within the village), and who officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals.

613 The *clans*, on the other hand, is a dispersed and apparently larger group, whose members live with their various paternal lines of descent. The size of the *clans* is unknown; Childs merely refers to it as a "large and widespread organization, with a recognized head". The office of head of the *clans* (*shulu wopota*) descends from mother's brother to sister's son. Negotiable and movable property, including cattle and trade goods, is owned by the *clans* and inherited by the sister's son. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons, and was even able to pass them or sell them into slavery, to meet his own debts. The patrilineal household is usually responsible for training children, especially during their early years, but they are frequently sent to the *clans* (i.e. to the mother's brother) for at least a part of their education. At death or divorce of parents, children go to the *clans*.

613 The head (*shulu wopota*) of the *clans* is usually both the legal and spiritual head of the group, although today the two functions are often divided. He is in charge of the spirit but (*etombo*) of the guardian spirit of the *clans* (of whom there may be more than one, and of whom he becomes one after death). He leads the *clans* in propitiatory rituals carried out in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes within the group, or in prayers made for desired economic advantages. (Apparently no regular rituals are carried out by the *clans*.) The *shulu wopota* may or may not be at the same time a village headman; if he is, he will be priest of two lines and have charge of two spirit butts; if he is not, there may be two (or more) priests in the village, each in charge of the spirit-but of his *clans* or *clans*.

The *mbili yohanyi* and the *mbili yohumbo*

613 The *clans* and the *clans* are both divided into male and female "sides": the *mbili yohanyi* (the side of the bowl) and the *mbili yohumbo* (the side of the basket). It has been noted above that uterine brothers and sisters belong to the same *clans* and *clans*, but to the male or female side in each, according to sex. The composition of these "sides" is

(1) loc. cit.

(2) If some villages within the class cannot trace mutual relationship, the class should perhaps be called a *patriline* rather than a *patrilineage*.

(3) See below, p. 28.

for murder as two oxen and two slaves; for adultery, two oxen, a pig, and a slave.) Today a man who has committed adultery sometimes takes the woman and all children under three years of age, but this is for the husband to decide. An adulterer with one of the chief's wives was castrated but not killed, and the castration might be compounded for a high fine, while he, his sisters, and the sons of his sisters would become slaves of the chief. (1) Hensby states finally that "Criminal law did not distinguish between responsibility for intentional and unintentional offences." (2)

There is no information regarding the kinds of cases tried or the punishments given in the courts of village headmen or sub-chiefs today.

INHERITANCE

It has been noted above that movable property is inherited in the maternal line, land in the paternal line. (3) The eldest brother of the deceased's mother has the first claim and is responsible for settling disputes. He may distribute the property to the mother of the deceased, the maternal grandfather, or to a brother of the deceased, but is not compelled to do this. Women never inherit cattle or land, although the sisters of a deceased woman usually receive most of her household utensils (the rest going to her husband). A widow goes to the house of (7 marriages) the eldest brother of the deceased or her own maternal uncle, or she may return to her father's village. Apparently her children accompany her, although one would expect them to go to her brother. (4)

DIVORCE

Divorce appears to be infrequent; grounds for divorce are many, but difficulties are often overcome by a compromise between the two kin groups concerned. Causes for dissatisfaction on the part of a husband include his wife's incompetence, dishonesty, physical weakness, or infidelity (in the last case today a fine from the adulterer is usually accepted and the marriage continues). Sterility is not a ground for divorce; usually the husband takes a second wife, but the first maintains her position as head wife. Sterility in the male is sometimes suspected, in which case the husband may try another girl, with his wife's consent, or the woman another man. A woman may divorce a man if he is impotent (not sterile), or if he ill-treats her, but not because he is unfaithful. If for any of these reasons the woman returns to her family, the latter are expected to return the marriage payment, although they may wait until another suitor appears who will pay the deserted husband. Whether the initiative in divorce is taken by the woman or the man, the marriage is not annulled until a renunciatory ceremony has been carried out by the husband, the wife, and the wife's father, in the presence of the village headman. The husband receives from his wife's father a roll of tobacco and a pig, and then places leaves (5) and palm oil on his wife's back; he then slaps his wife's back saying "It is finished".

(1) Hensby, op. cit., p. 200. (2) *Ibid.*

(3) See above, p. 18, and Childs, 1949, p. 44.

(4) Hensby, (2) 1954, p. 124.

(5) The leaf used is of the *api* tree; the same leaf is tied to the pole of the cradle of a new village, in a sign of divorce from the old site. (Childs, 1949, p. 40; this is the only context in which Childs mentions divorce.)

HISTORICAL SOURCES

123

He draws the crescentic arrowhead (p. 123) still common among the Ovimbundu and Vachekue; the double iron gong (p. 122); and the musical bow, which he calls a viola (p. 121).

Sogaur states that iron-working had an advanced technique at Dindo, more than half a century ago. According to Sogaur, the blacksmith was using scrap iron from European sources (II, p. 14).

Perhaps the most valuable of Chatelain's books is "Fifty Folk Tales of Angola." The stories are accompanied by translations and ethnological notes, the most important of which are references to the carrying of a corpse on a pole; the building of a cairn of stones over the corpse of a hunter; matrilineal descent and the power of the maternal uncle over the persons of his nieces and nephews (sisters' children). My observations included some details respecting the pawning of a sister's children to redeem the debts of their mother's brother. Chatelain adds that sisters' children are successors to private property and chieftainship (pp. 8-10). My notes agree that property is inherited by children of a deceased man's sister, but my informants said that a new chieftain is normally the eldest son of the principal wife of the dead chief. Chatelain's folklore stories, fifty in number, relate chiefly to animals; this was the only kind of story told to me, but W. C. Bell has recorded a few tales of another type.

Marquardsen (1928) devotes only one-fourth of his book to the ethnology of Angola, which he treats in a very general way; there is no section dealing specifically with any particular tribe. The author calls attention to Chapman's observation of rock paintings of South African Bushman type, between Cuma and Luimbale in northwest Angola. I have elsewhere remarked on the occasional occurrence of physical types which show a strain of Bushman blood. Today Bushmen penetrate southern Angola from the Kalahari (Plate LXIX, Figs. 1, 2), but their presence in times past or present does not affect the course of history or the data of ethnology to an appreciable extent.

Marquardsen gives some notes of a general kind on Vaheneza, Mabulla and other tribes of southwest Angola. The suggestion is feasible that the Umbundu name Suku, for a supreme being, is the same as the Nsambi of Lunda and the Congo. Marquardsen refers to the importance of the maternal uncle in Umbundu society, to the poison ordeal, and to the burial of an Umbundu chief in oxhide, all of which points were recorded in my observations at Elenda.

Ferreira Diniz's book is unobtainable, but, judging from the summary given in *Asiropes* (XX, 1925, pp. 321-331), the information was collected by a questionnaire widely distributed among adminis-

SOCIAL LIFE

= 199

- I. Grandparents.
- II. Parents.
- III. Speaker's generation.
- IV. Children.
- V. Grandchildren.

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Numbers on the left of the sign (-) refer to males, those on the right, to females.

The terms of relationship used in Tables E and F are as follows:

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|---|---|
| 1. <i>Uhai wanga</i> . My wife (vocative).
Ngonga's wife calls him <i>wanga</i> ,
my husband. | 11. <i>Ondimanda</i> . Children of spouse's
family. |
| 2. <i>Mama, mungu, mungungu</i> . Younger
brother. | 12. <i>Mama, inana</i> . Mother's brother
(direct ascendant). |
| 3. <i>Kaka, kano</i> . Older brother. | 13. <i>Kaka</i> . An old person in grand-
parent's and grandchild's genera-
tion. |
| 4. <i>Mbungu</i> . Sister (vocative).
<i>Makui wanga</i> . Sister (nonvocative). | <i>Sakala, Isakala</i> . Male grand-
parents. |
| 5. <i>Nana</i> . In-laws of speaker's genera-
tion. | 14. <i>Makala</i> . Female grandparents. |
| 6. <i>Ndimanda</i> . In-laws of ascending or
descending generation. | 15. <i>Ondaka</i> . Grandchild of either sex. |
| 7. <i>Tata</i> . Father. | 16. <i>Ondungu</i> . Mother's brother's or
father's sister's children. |
| 8. <i>Mai</i> . Mother. | 17. <i>Ondungu</i> . Father's sister's hus-
band. |
| 9. <i>Aphai</i> . Father's sister (female
father). | |
| 10. <i>Ondungu</i> . Ond , used for speaker's
family only. | |

NOTE: Age distinctions are made chiefly
in the speaker's own generation.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

In dealing with marriage rites it was stated that a woman had to contribute certain articles to the home; these are the utensils that she uses in her daily work. The baskets, pottery, pounders, and brushes may seem insignificant, but nevertheless there are rules regulating their disposal at death. Her husband will retain some of the articles; the remainder will be shared among the deceased woman's sisters.

The disposal of a widow is a matter for discussion among the relatives. The husband makes no bequest to his widow and children, though the children may receive a small gift of a pig or some corn. The property of a man is bequeathed to his mother's brother or to his sister's sons. The eldest brother of the deceased or the maternal uncle of the widow takes her to his house along with her children. If her father is alive he may take her. Ngonga says that each responsible relative says, "It is better that you should take her"; at last some one says, "I will take her."

When explaining the system of inheritance Ngonga was clear on two points. In the first place wives and children of the deceased are

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428 not entitled to inheritance of land, cattle, or anything else belonging to the dead man. The greater part of the property would be bequeathed to the eldest brother of the deceased's mother.

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768 There appears to be discussion as to the distribution of property, but the maternal uncle is responsible for settling disputes. He himself has the first claim, and in Ngonga's words, "If there are quarrels about the cattle, land, and other things, the mother's eldest brother will settle them."

The mother's brother has rights over his sister's children even to the extent of pawning them to pay his own debts. On the other hand the maternal uncle is responsible for the conduct of his sister's children. He would have to pay fines incurred by thefts they committed, and he provides for his sister's son a wife who is either his daughter or his widow.

(421) Ngonga stated that the maternal uncle does not invariably take all the property of a deceased nephew for himself. He may give something to the deceased's mother, the deceased's maternal grandfather, or to a brother of the deceased. Such gifts appear to be the outcome of good will on the part of the dead man's maternal uncle; there is no compulsion. Women never inherit cattle or rights to the use of land.

423 The king is the head of the legal system, though his activities
692 as such are not so great as those of the village headman (*sekulu*).
622 The *osekulu* (there are usually more than one) of a village witness the final act in a divorce ceremony. They used to have charge of trials for theft, murder, adultery, likewise the right of settling arguments concerning the ownership of land. It was the *sekulu* who distributed the land to the extended families when a new village site was opened. The maternal uncles settled the minor divisions among the limited families.

643 There are many kings among the Ovimbundu, but I thought that there was a tendency to confuse the titles of *osoma* ("king") and *sekulu* ("headman" or "chief" of a village). The jurisdiction of a king is so well known that any person is able to say under which king he lives. Ngonga said definitely that a man of the Ovimbundu who was under the jurisdiction of a certain king would have to obey the commands of a visiting king, provided they were not in any way disapproved of by the king to whom first allegiance was due.

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[463] A chief may demand labor for the building of his house or the cultivation of his land. He does not pay for this but usually gives beer to the workers; sometimes he secures the labor and gives nothing in return.

WIDER CULTURE CONTACTS

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E. Torday's paper, "Dualism in Western Bantu Religion and Social Organization," is an admirable summary of a wide background of Bantu beliefs with which those of the Ovimbundu agree in detail. Torday (VI) has also given a summary of Bantu sexual relations. His summary of prenuptial relationships of boys and girls, the system of polygyny, and domestic arrangements in general, indicates that records made among the Ovimbundu are but a sample of an extensive and homogeneous series of Bantu sex customs.

With regard to the classificatory system of relationships and cross-cousin marriage, sufficient quotations have been given to indicate that the system of the Ovimbundu is one which is paralleled in Rhodesia, the Congo basin, and still more remote regions. To the instances given should be added corroborative examples from J. Roscoe (*The Baganda*, p. 109), R. S. Rattray (*Ashanti*, p. 29), and H. A. Stayt (*The Bavenda*, pp. 172-184). L. H. Buxton and R. S. Rattray have offered a theory to explain the kinship system and cross-cousin marriage in Ashanti (*Jour. African Soc.*, XXIV, p. 83; *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, p. 318).

In Africa a classificatory system of relationships is particularly characteristic of the Bantu area. The system is Semitic and Hamitic. It is not reported among the Bushmen, but is in vogue among the Nama Hottentots. The wide distribution of a classificatory system, with variations, and its importance in tribal life, suggest antiquity (see Hoernlé, II, and B. Z. Seligman, III).

H. Baumann (I) has prepared maps showing the distribution of customs affecting descent of property in Africa. Investigation among the Ovimbundu proves that their scheme of inheritance of property is part of a more widely distributed system. Baumann (pp. 66, 127) states that in the Kasai valley and the Cabinda Enclave the rights of the mother's brother are expressed in his control of his sister's children. The power of the maternal uncle in Ovimbundu families was reported, and it was stated that he has the right to sell his sister's children for redemption of his debts. Baumann's map further indicates an area in which property descends, not to a wife or children, but to a mother's brother, or to the sons of the deceased man's oldest sister. The social system of the Ovimbundu is definitely a part of this cultural matrix, which extends to the north and north-east of the Ovimbundu but, according to Baumann's record, not to the south of Angola. In the south of Angola among pastoral people a system of succession and inheritance in the male line prevails, and

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● 428 this method is characteristic of many pastoral tribes of south and east Africa.

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611 The Ovimbundu are situated between two systems of reckoning descent, succession, and inheritance; namely, the Negro system of the Congo region, and that of the eastern and southern cattle-keeping people. In view of the culture contacts described in Chapter X, the mixed system of the Ovimbundu is intelligible.

[174] On the one hand the Ovimbundu emphasize the rights of the mother's brother while denying inheritance to a wife and her children, but in royal families the eldest son of the principal wife succeeds to kingship. Among commoners descent is reckoned through both the father and the mother. Therefore the inference is that the Ovimbundu have, by virtue of their position and contacts, made a blending of two distinct social systems, one of which gives succession to office in the male line, while the other gives inheritance in the female line. In their system of burial rites for kings the Ovimbundu follow the usages of the pastoral area.

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608 Exchange of blood is an Umbundu custom resembling that which occurs widely in Negro Africa. This exchange of blood is the typical Negro form of the blood brotherhood. Another rite is the Hamitic custom of drinking a mixture of blood and milk; this the Ovimbundu do not practise.

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241 The hoe-cultivation practised by Ovimbundu women is in agreement with Baumann's association of hoe-culture and matriarchal conditions, the latter being indicated by the importance of the mother's brother. These concomitant factors are shown by Baumann (II, p. 292) to be characteristic of a wide area in the Congo basin. To this area may be added the whole of central Angola.

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567 The factors of slavery among the Ovimbundu are in agreement with all that is known of the treatment of slaves in the Congo area and farther west Africa. Slaves of the Ovimbundu taken in warfare were treated with less consideration than those who passed into slavery to redeem a debt. There was also discrimination in favor of slaves taken in local quarrels among the Ovimbundu themselves. The killing and eating of slaves in north Angola is a custom whose early occurrence has already been noted.

AFRICAN PUBERTY RITES

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881 Initiation ceremonies for boys and girls are at present well preserved among the Vachokue of eastern Angola; for a period such ceremonies declined among the Ovimbundu, but there is now a

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

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[143] Inheritance of movable goods was traditionally entirely matrilineal. Today informants are confused as to what ought to be done. Inquiry about particular cases will reveal that often no movable property was left by the deceased, it having been used to pay for such expenses of the illness and funeral as the purchase of medicines and the buying of animals to be slaughtered at the feasts.

Where there is movable property, the transmission of it to the heirs is carried out in a rather informalized way, as so often happens in Umbundu social activities. The actual division of property is undertaken by a kinsman of the deceased. This should apparently be the most senior kinsman. It may be a cross-cousin or 'brother' or a sister's son.²⁹ How it is decided who is the senior kinsman, and who are fitted to participate in the share-out is not very clear. Nor does it seem that there is any effective device against the sharer-out giving himself the lion's share, except the general pressures and reciprocities of kinship. The principle accepted in the share-out is that inheritance should be a reflection of the relations which existed with the dead man, and also be a reward of funeral services. Nothing is kept for kin who are away working, and a son who did not keep in contact with his father would be omitted from the share-out.

By inheritance a man can increase his small stock of possessions. He is unlikely to receive anything much in the way of money, and since there is no land shortage, and, as yet, little in the way of valuable immovable property such as brick

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178 rubber trade to be reconciled with the statement by Childs that fear of sorcery was increasing (Childs pp. 57-58)? I suggest that the final disintegration of the old kinship groups may have been marked by particularly sharp social tensions, but that once these groups were in fact dissolved and a new form of social relations established the fear of sorcery may have declined. It should also be remembered that as indicated in Chapter V the present-day economic values of the Ovimbundu do not lead to expectations that a prosperous individual will share his wealth with poorer kinsmen, as was the case in the time of the rubber trade. Hence accusations of sorcery based on disappointed expectations of generosity are unlikely to arise.

[P11] Another aspect of the question which cannot be explored here in detail is the lack of agreement on the causality of classics of happenings or individual events. Thus one informant will say that a woman's pains in childbirth are due to sorcerers among her kin, another will say that they are caused by God (as we would say, are natural).

²⁹ Hambly, pp. 199-200.

KINSHIP

houses, coffee plants and so on there is little likelihood of disputes arising about the inheritance of land claims. A woman's property should be given to her sisters, after her children have had their cut. In one case a man inherited his sister's debts but allowed her children to inherit her property, 'lest they be sad'. A wife's fields return to her husband. 428

Inheritance is then a process by which the relations of certain kin, both sons and sister's sons, with the deceased are recognized by the transmission of his property. As with other aspects of Umbundu kinship, while the existence of the kinship tie provides the basis on which to found a relationship, its content is determined by the nature of the contacts between the individuals involved and the services given. 602

Although there is a definite tendency for men of chiefly stock to have longer pedigrees than other individuals there is no chiefly genealogy. When Paulo, the elder of the school of Epalanga, told me that had he not been blind he might have been chief of Gumba, he quoted the names of four chiefs to whom he was related. The chieftancy is not tied to a lineage, but can be held by any individual who can claim links with a former chief or chiefs. People 'of the blood of the chiefs' in no sense form a differentiated group of aristocrats significant in social life. 634

In similar fashion membership of the spirit-linked professions and of certain cults seems to have been a matter of succession of one individual to the role of another.³⁰ Membership of the hunting and smithing professions descended patrilineally, but if a hunter or smith had no son his position could be succeeded to by a daughter's son.³¹ 554

7. *Kinship in a Changing Society*

From this, and from other chapters, a picture of Umbundu kinship may emerge as something so blurred, confused, and confusing, as hardly to merit the term 'kinship system', yet at 602 103

³⁰ I.e. rather than admission to a corporate group of hunters. A man can inherit his father's hunting spirit before the latter's death; in Epalanga Batista had received the hunting spirit of his father Epalata.

³¹ My informants were not agreed as to whether a sister's son could inherit in default of a son.

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

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183 the same time clearly an important part of social life. Kinship norms are confused, as is the correct term to use in a particular relationship. Ritual and jural sanctions are lacking, as are institutions based on the regular co-operation of groups of kinsmen. Yet a man likes to live with kinsfolk and there is a tendency for kin to cluster together in a neighbourhood.

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621 By the very facts, that so many of a man's neighbours are his kinsmen, and that there is very little marked differentiation between the behaviour towards different categories of kin, kinship is robbed of any great specificity of content. It might be said that it is the quantity rather than the quality of kinship ties that makes kinship significant in establishing a 'sense of community' in a neighbourhood, in that the multiplicity of local kin ties creates some identification between a man's range of kin and his neighbourhood. At the same time a kinship tie provides a basis on which a closer relationship may be built by reciprocal services. It appears that the inheritance of property recognizes kinship in this way by recognizing claims not on the basis of strict genealogical proximity but on the quality of the relationship.

128 A discussion of marriage and the household must be left to the next chapter. The outline given of the present kinship system is sufficiently clear to begin an examination of the reasons for the changes. This must rely to some extent on speculation, owing to a lack of information on the actual working of the kinship system while it was in transition to its present form.

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178 The key change is the disappearance of the kinship groups. These, it seems, disappeared because of their high degree of dependence on the particular type of economy existing before 1911. It has already been argued that the distinction between the patrikin and the matrikin is an attempt to isolate economic claims and conflicts from village and political relationships, and that the giving of loans without right of repayment within the matrikin was called for by a trading system in which credit played an important part. With the end of the trade the wealth passing through Umbundu hands declined sharply, and there was neither need for funds to meet trading losses nor currency to provide them. A man obtained money either by growing crops